

MY **LIFE** ON THE SLUSH PILE

MY SISTER IS MY MUM

A META-MEMOIR



BY **LINDSAY** WINCHERAUK

MY LIFE ON THE SLUSH PILE



A story about finding yourself after accidentally discovering your life started with a lie.

Not every day do you meet someone who watched both of his parents die from The Big C and laid them to rest, only to discover sixteen years later that they weren't his parents after all!

It's like being reborn as a whole different person.

↑ **FUCKED UP** ↓
| **FUCKED UP** |



↑ CAN I TAKE YOU HIGHER ↑

VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

10 FEBRUARY 2001

It's time to fuck things up a bit. ⁽²³⁾

I'm forty. Somewhat intelligent. I am who I am. I've never announced what I'm not when sharing opinions.

I'm not a doctor.

Before I share with you what I think about Global Warming, I'd like to make it perfectly clear, I'm not a scientist.

I allowed my IQ to lay in silence.

IQ to the side: I wonder what trying ecstasy would be like?

WHY?

LIFE CRISIS: Perhaps?

Did I just want to get high?

Read on. I'm sure clarity will eventually be found.

QUEST FOR ECSTASY: THE WORLD AFTER HOURS CLUB

Now, where does one find drugs? ⁽²⁴⁾

Welcome back, Lindsay; it's been a while. You seem to be enjoying the Booze Wagon. What can I help you with today?

Walk. Walk. Walk. This store is called Blunt Brothers, and wicked, just a few doors down is the New Amsterdam. So, I think I might be on the right path.

What could possibly go wrong? I'm forty. Clean-shaven. Shorn dome. I'm often mistaken for law enforcement.

I slithered into Blunt Brothers and nervously sashayed ⁽²⁵⁾ my way to the counter. The clerk's face twisted; it was unreadable; her hair was purple, covered in tats, and her body was utterly pierced, everywhere.

I whispered to her, "Excuse me, I'm looking to try new things." I cupped my hands over my lips and emphatically mouthed. "ECSTASY!"

Ten minutes later, I repeated my futile effort at New Amsterdam.

Don't give up Lindsay, I want to take you higher; follow me.

ALTERATIONS

It sure is blisteringly cold out.

Who are you talking to? ⁽²⁶⁾

It is time to get high.

I heard about this place, ⁽²⁷⁾ I'm nervous, I'll walk by a couple dozen times. Come on, courage, you can do in, go down the stairs. Go. Go. Go. You will be okay. Down one step, two steps, three steps, enter. Goodbye naivety, hello experience.

Lindsay, you used to be the anti-smoking guy, didn't you? What the fuck are you doing?

Piss off.

The bass music was pumping. Glow sticks feverishly swayed. The room pulsed. The dance floor was packed with people floating in inebriation + scantily clad + hedonistic. I had entered a den of indulgence.

I felt safe.

To the left of the entrance was an open area filled with couches covered in throw pillows. The heart was occupied by scrumptious gyrating bodies. At the back of the club, was a room dubbed the Red Room where people went to chill and process their selections of alteration.

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I was wearing dress shoes, and I stood out.

I plopped myself onto a couch in the front area. Conversations drifted freely through the air; people flashed in; people flashed out.

A saucy girl to my right said to me in a relaxing voice, *"Nice shoes."*

We hit it off.

She asked me, *"What are you on?"*

"Only alcohol. How about you?"

She began to recite the alphabet, starting with E.

"My name is Samantha. What's yours?"

"Lin... my name is Mark. Do you know where I could get E?"

Before my lips started moving, Sam went — **POOF** — and was back in a flash with a plastic baggie. *"Here. Go buy water."*

With water in hand, I asked Samantha, *"What do I do?"*

Sam grabbed my hand and led me to the Red Room.

"Pop the pill. Wash it down with a swig. And wait. Soon, beautiful heaven will arrive."

Samantha was half my age, and in the club, that is a moot point because age evaporates with paid admission.

My temperature began to spike. The ceiling started wobbling and morphing into different shapes. Worms commenced wiggling in perfect synchronization with the charging music, dropping from the ceiling. A kaleidoscope of colours started revolving from spectral pinwheels.

I think I might have been getting high. ⁽²⁸⁾

My heart began to race, my body tingled with warmth; I belonged here, I felt complete. Illusion and fantasy were sharing oxygen with reality. The urge to dance began to consume me.

I was *dazzlingly fucking high*.

Drugs are great!

"What are you on?" Was the common question.

I hope a kissable stranger sits next to me.

This is far better than under the covers with a flashlight.

I wanted to fuck. And dance.

In the heart of the club, my rhythm found me. ⁽²⁹⁾

I ripped my shirt off, flipped my water bottle in the air, caressed my sweating torso seductively, took three steps, shook my ass, took three more steps, and shook my ass again.

Kissable strangers began to grope and kiss me. Lips felt heavenly. I found Sam dancing next to me, so I did the reasonable thing: I started licking her arms.

She covered her arms.

At the closing time (7:30 AM), I had a raging **HARD ON**. ⁽³⁰⁾ Going home was going to be filled with frustration + pain.

SPECTRAL SOCIETIES

One trip into the dungeon of carnal pursuits would indeed suffice, wouldn't it?

No.

Although the deviant behaviour frightened me, the menagerie of the bizarre opened my mind to new realms. What I once denounced had suddenly become acceptable. My essence was ripe for cultivation. ⁽³²⁾

I vowed to never return.

My phone rang.

Hello, who is this?

High, I'm High. Do you want to meet with me again?

I researched the evils of drugs, one article: BAD, one report: NO BIG DEAL.

I only read the second article.

By the time Thursday rolled around, I had begun thinking maybe. By Saturday, I'd head out for drinks with friends, and when I knew the After Hours was open, I'd vanish and trip down the stairs once more. This time with more sensible shoes.

A warm rush of pleasure engulfed me.

Why is everyone wearing opera glasses and draped in bubble wrapping?

Interesting, that crew over there is donning goalie masks and wearing sumo suits.

I glanced to my right.

Hello, Scottish Andy. You don't say. One minute you were on the dance floor – the next on the flight deck of the Starship Enterprise with Captain Kirk and Homer Simpson. I hope you had fun. Welcome back!

While you're here, beautiful opera glasses, by the way, can you help me get off the dance floor? Every time I make it to the edge, a wall magically appears.

I'd step three times, flip, caress, and shake my ass.

Hey, gorgeous stranger, why is your hand on my dick? Don't stop, I don't mind.

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LOGIC doesn't say a word.

I need to sit. I know, the Red Room. That's better; it's nice to take a load off. I said "Hi" to a couple sitting next to me. It's a pleasure meeting you. Blink. Oh, you're fucking. Why not here?

This place is magnificent, Unlike the world of alcohol, violence-free.

What's that LOGIC, you think it may ultimately be more aggressive in the long run?

My dick doesn't agree with you. Now beat it. I know what I'm doing.

I'm trapped. I'll be back next week, next week, and the weeks after.

Don't be a fool, son. These people are victims. They will crash and burn out one after the other, with some falling into harsher choices on the Drug Vice Menu. When they do, they'll be incapable of finding normal ever again.

LOGIC, I said, beat it.

Fortunately, being forty allowed me to understand the transitory nature of experimentation. I intuitively knew the revellers were desperately trying to find a place of belonging. But the club, like life, often resided in the cliques of the beautiful, and they were notorious for slamming the doors shut on those trying to enter.

Usage shares fabrics with paranoia. Lips began moving. The conversation is about you. Ghouls crawled out of the walls and from beneath the floor.

A SHORT TRIP INTO THE FUTURE

Andy and Mike had experienced life-altering visions, collapsing on Trish's bathroom floor. Trish ⁽³³⁾ hovered above them. Dr. Ken flew alongside. Mike and Andy heard voices; Trish was close to collapsing. She asked everyone to leave so the voices floating in the air could dissipate.

The DOCTOR asked if we were doing the right thing.

Leaving three incredibly fucked-up people who are hearing the devil talk to them to fend for themselves, how could that possibly be wrong?

I returned to the club the following Saturday night.

23. The current time is 8:25 AM.
24. May I venture a guess: Drug Dealers.
25. I'm not sure if one can nervously sashay?
26. You.
27. This place is an After-Hours Club called The World.
28. You're an idiot.
29. It is okay to laugh "at" me.
30. I promise ⁽³¹⁾ never to use the word "raging" again when describing my dick.
31. I promise.
32. No words. I vomited in my mouth when I typed that line.
33. You will be meeting Trish in the following few pages.

AND I'M FREE
AND I W FREE

FREE FALLIN' - FALLIN'
FREE FALLIN' - FALLIN'

ALL THE VAMPIRES, WALKIN' THROUGH THE VALLEY
ALL THE VAMPIRES, WALKIN' THROUGH THE VALLEY

TRISH TRASH

VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

10 NOVEMBER 2001-15 FEBRUARY 2003

THE WORLD AFTER HOURS

VANCOUVER

10 NOVEMBER 2001

Where, the fuck, have you been, Cupid? Gail dumped me ten years ago. I'm lonely?

Napping. Don't worry, you will be finding love again soon.

Our bodies were intertwined on the dance floor. We spun round and round like an awful music video to the rhythm of the pulsing music. That's not all that was pulsing. ⁽³⁴⁾ Our lips were locked in a passionate kiss. Electricity was firing through my veins. Another kiss, and I began to melt. Past loves were being washed away by the beauty of ↑high↑.

Life was about to change.

↑HIGH↑ = CHANGE

I was about to go down a road where happiness would be derived from denial, much like pillows pressed into my face would hide the inevitable outcome of being out of place with my reality.

A MOMENT OF REFLECTION

- Corrie: adopted.
- Gail: adopted.
- When I was with Corrie: My parents were dying; school was a struggle because my parents were dying. I was bartending. I had suffered numerous athletic injuries requiring surgery.
- When I was with Gail: I was trying to buy a hotel in Jamaica; life direction was a struggle because—I'm not entirely sure; I guess I was just directionless. I was bartending. I suffered numerous athletic and life injuries requiring surgery.

Likely just a coincidence, wouldn't one think?

ENDLESS KISS: CONTINUED

Our spinning stopped, we unlocked lips, we needed to find elsewhere to satisfy my anxious ⁽³⁵⁾ penis.

I wanted to *fuck* Trish.

Earlier in the evening, while I sat in the Red Room waiting for the mixture of alcohol and pharmaceuticals to kick in, a sexy young girl ambled into the room.

The guy sitting next to me asked me, *"Would you like to meet her?"*

"My name is Victoria; I'm attached."

A smoking hot girl, a friend of Victoria's, glided into the room. Victoria told me it was her friend's birthday. Victoria encouraged me to kiss her.

For the next seven hours, Trish and I were locked in a tongue-filled kiss. Fireworks were exploding inside of me. I hoped Trish felt the same way.

Logic appeared out of a drug-fuelled haze and said, *"She kissed you for seven-friggen-hours, fool."*

Logic had made a good point.

Decision time had arrived: Call it a night or press on?

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FUCKED UP screamed: CONTINUE.

Where to go?

- Trish's place was off-limits. She had a house guest from Edmonton, spineless Dr. Kenny.
- My place was off-limits. My flatmate, Wally, was inclination free of my soirees into darkness.

My desires burned intensely, and I wanted to press flesh ⁽³⁶⁾ with Trish.

Think, Lindsay, think. I know, a hotel room screams romance. You agree, Trish. Great, let's set forth and explore the possibilities.

"Hello, Mr. Desk Clerk, we need a room."

Shake. Shake. Shake. I'd like to get to know more about you. Your family. Your dreams. Nah. Too corny.

Shake. Shake. Shake. Tell me about your views on the future, career, love, and life. Nah. Garbage.

I'll let my erection do my talking. C'mon, dick, help me find the magic words. What's that dick? Take Trish's hand and slap it on you? Okay. Look in her eyes? Okay. Now speak.

“Feel this. It is going to be your toy ⁽³⁷⁾ for the next several hours.”

Why aren't you running?

Trish's lips were supple and sweet. My pulse raced. I ripped her clothes off her delicate torso, licking every inch of her body. I nibbled her earlobes and licked down her spine. The heat intensified.

I wanted to devour her, to drink in every taste and smell. My heart momentarily stopped – with her kisses sparking it back to life. I longed for every inch of her silky-smooth skin. Boundaries were being stripped away. I was going to places I had never been before. I licked my way over her clavicle; Trish's nipples sprang to life, breasts heaving. She moaned as we both drowned in our chemistry.

I could barely contain myself. Beads of sweat formed on Trish's chest. I felt as if I were about to explode only to drown in her arms. The intensity increased, bringing me pleasure each time she squirmed. I licked the inside of her legs slowly at first, then lengthened my strokes increasing the pressure. Trish was sent into orbit, consumed by ecstasy. She begged for more. Eventually, I licked and caressed until I reached –

Anyway, we clicked, and I have a video to prove it.

Feel fortunate; my first attempt at describing the night ended with: Gentle waves of the ocean lapping up against the beach.

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Pursuits completed, we headed back to her place.

I told her my name wasn't Mark as we climbed the stairs to her front door.

She was okay with my revelation.

And besides, she seemed to have taken a shine to her new toy!

THE SANDPIPER PUB

WHITE ROCK, BRITISH COLUMBIA

16 NOVEMBER 2001

It took you until Friday to call Trish, what are you, a coward?

When Trish and I met, I managed a seaside bar called the Sandpiper Pub in White Rock. The owners were divorced. Judy was an ex-Olympic swimmer; Dale was an ex-professional football player.

Owning a bar while divorced would indeed – ⁽³⁸⁾

Dale liked sc___ing a blonde waitress with a bit of booty.

Judy desperately searched for ways to make Dale jealous. Her first effort was breast enhancement. When that didn't work, she married an ab_sive dentist.

She had a child with the abusive dentist when that didn't work.

Dale kept scolding the blonde waitress, *Server* if you'd like my story to be politically correct.

Judy tried playing the staff against him

Dale didn't care.

Judy dumped her son's primary care on Nester. Nester is a cross between *Mr. Rogers* meets a *Priest* meets *Jack Nicholson* from *The Shining*.

His body odour was far past rancid.

He'd rub his index finger in a circular motion on the inside of his knee and then express Judy's undying love for Dale. His voice scratched piercingly. Somehow, it was still meek.

"*She won't let him go,*" Nester said his index finger circling.

Judy asked me to transport him the fifty kilometres from Vancouver to White Rock because Nester lived only a few blocks from me.

He'd look over to me while I was driving, a finger circling rapidly, and with his voice cracking, he'd say, "*I used to watch her swim every day. We used to go out platonically. If only Dale was gone. They've been cooking the books. One day, Dale will be gone, and Judy will be –*"

I kid you not.

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I mentioned Nester's stench to Judy. She informed me he doesn't like to bathe. Instead, she said he uses his bathtub for storage.

The news about *cooking* the books was far from a secret. For the past eight months, my management mandate was: DON'T RING IN A SINGLE SALE.

Judy asked me to drive Nestor again, I said NO.

BACKUP: TWO DAYS

WHITE ROCK, BRITISH COLUMBIA

14 NOVEMBER 2001

Judy fired me.

FLASHBACK

VANCOUVER

31 MAY 2001

"*Lindsay, you're fired.*"

Remember Timeac, the POS company I worked for? I was their top salesperson. Anyway, Timeac hired a sales manager named Ryan. Ryan was an asshole. He ordered salaried employees to come in at 6 AM, three hours before their regular start times and hours before transit serviced the location of our office.

At the end of one of the meetings, Ryan announced, "It's 8:30. *We don't have time for questions. I know you are all eager to get to work.*"

"Excuse me, Ryan, everyone has been at work since 6," I'd gingerly say.

One week later, Ryan gave me a letter saying that if I disagreed with him, I would keep my mouth shut.

Two weeks later, he canned me.

One year later, I ran into the company's owner at the airport. He told me he lost everything: his wife, business, health, everything. He then said he's bouncing back, working for a company out of Dallas. He thought I'd be a perfect fit—saying if I was interested, he would highly recommend me.

I reminded him of the day he and Ryan fired me.

"I made a mistake," he said timidly.

Dale gave me a glowing reference letter after my dismissal from the Sandpiper.

Maybe I need to open my own business to figure out why I will eventually have to let myself go.

FIRST DATE

VANCOUVER

THE WORLD AFTER HOURS

17 NOVEMBER 2001

Being fired allowed me to phone Trish on Friday night and plan to meet the following night at the club.

Trish is Chinese, ~~yet, somehow, not Asian~~. Trish earned a psychology degree from the University of Alberta and worked as a flight attendant (FA) for Air Canada, and she worked with autistic children.

Trish's family had disowned her, but her engineer father continued to pay her bills.

Trish made a killer first impression: she was twenty-five and had already been a seven-year veteran of the party culture.

I wasn't twenty-five.

She played hard.

THIS FIRST DATE DITTY IS FOR ADULTS ONLY

MARY

VANCOUVER

17 NOVEMBER 2001

Welcome to virgin territory.

The club began to skew my morals. Humanity was suffering blow after blow with each hit of ↑high↑. Like Vegas, everything was okay if it happened in the club. However, it was an emotionally violent place.

ESCAPE = PAIN

Quite often, escape signals you no longer fit into what society deems normal. Every time you ingest, the further down the rabbit hole you slide. The only thing relevant in the club is the pills or the lines or —

I willfully was entering a relationship whose roots depended upon the substances readily available inside the confines of the club. I believed Trish and I was exceptions who could partake without becoming hypocritical. *How fucking ridiculous?*

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Son, if I catch you smoking, I'll kick your ass. Here's a note. Now, go to the store and pick me up smokes.

Trish was a veteran of alteration and I, was a bumbling rookie.

One day, our club days would surely end, and Trish would eventually settle into my arms.⁽³⁹⁾

I was entering a new relationship while jobless, a foolish proposition at best.

During our second first date, we popped and started heading upward. The higher I climbed, the more clouded my decision-making became. I met Mary, a hot Croatian, in the Red Room, we kissed. And round and round and round we spun.

GUILT chimed in, *"You are nothing more than a high idiot."*

Mary invited me to go back to her place to press the flesh. I declined. Instead, I suggested, *"Would you like to come back to Trish's with us?"*

Sam joined us after picking up her long-sleeve shirt from the coat check.

With my mind racing, I sprawled out on Trish's bed in search of my elusive nemesis, *Logic*. I stripped. And then, I decided it was reasonable to start —⁽⁴⁰⁾

Mary grabbed Trish's Polaroid Camera and began snapping photos.

BUILD

During the twisted evening at the club, Trish + Mary took turns guessing my age. Mary guessed twenty-nine. Trish, thirty. I guessed, slightly higher.

After Mary and Sam vamoosed, Trish and I did it, all weekend long.

Come Monday, Trish gave me a key to her place, and I began living out of a suitcase, returning the nine blocks home to sporadically feed Fuzzy Nose & Toes.

I was in love! Fuck.

THE WORLD AFTER-HOURS

1 DECEMBER 2001

Time to jump on the high Ferris Wheel, a-fucking-gain.

I had a burning desire for it to end; I wanted our weekends to mirror our Wednesday-Fridays. ↑High↑ wanted us ↑high↑.

↑High↑ friends are, for the most part, nothing more than ↑high↑. If you weren't *fucking* ↑high↑, you might be able to realize; they're not friends.

159 Sacrificing Saturdays for drugs wasn't delusional.

Trish sat in a chair near the club's front; her eyes were transfixed on a neon sign reading H2O.

I looked deeply into her glazed-over eyes and said, "*I love you.*"

She gazed into mine.

A couple of seconds later, two guys with fan blades for legs joyfully spun by us.

We went home, ↑high↑.

Problems

THINKING INSIDE THE BOX

SEX-FILLED MEANINGLESS ROMP?

OR SOMETHING MORE?

Drugs were the foundation of our relationship. I had to accept that. If I didn't, we'd have a passionate sex-filled romp, ending prematurely. For the relationship to have legs, I would have to change.

Fuck off, Logic. I don't want to hear another peep.

- The club is a toxic wasteland.
- Friends are spectral in nature.
- People go to escape only to come out more scarred.
- Saturday morphs into Sunday Sketch Parties.
- Monday-Tuesday is time for the brain to restore itself to happiness.
- Trish always hosted the after-parties.
- Guests would flash in.
- Michael + Jeremy + Toni + Andrew + Kim + Kim + Jeremy + Patrick + Stephen +
- Most friendships were short-lived, some; would burn out needing to find reality again.
- Trish was the one constant.
- She assured me the party meant nothing.
- She told me one day it would end.
- She told me, *"Sweetie, the only way I'd ever break up with you is if you cheated on me."*

ENTER PATRICK

"Sweetie, why is there a Patrick phoning you from San Francisco?"

"Linds, it's nothing to worry about; he's just a friend?"

"You met him well you were high at the club. WTF?"

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BLIND EYE

MARCH 2002

"Don't worry, Linds, he's just a friend."

We had survived ⁽⁴²⁾ six months!

We were still hitting the club every Saturday + Sunday on long weekends.

Thanks to the drugs, Trish made a killer first impression and was an introvert presenting as an extrovert.

Whereas I was an extrovert masquerading as an introvert. I loved the individual, not the pack. Trish loved being surrounded by groups of drug-addled lost souls. I hated the Sketch Parties. I found the pack to be emotionally vapid.

During the week, her friends came and went. Most of the time, without the personality-enhancing medicine, Trish would sit in front of her computer playing Flight Simulator, leaving me to entertain.

Out of the blue, I became severely ill. A specialist thought my ailment might turn fatal with my liver failing. He believed I had contracted a rare liver ailment prevalent in

individuals of Asian descent.

As I reeled in my struggle to recover, Trish continued going to the club.

Magically, one day, my illness was gone.

HOW'S IT GOING TONIGHT, FAG?

THE FIRESIDE PUB

NEW WESTMINSTER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

8 APRIL 2002

New Westminster is a backwards ⁽⁴³⁾ community close to Vancouver. I took a bartending gig at the Fireside Pub.

The Fireside Pub is trapped in the 1970s. The walls were velour. And on most nights, a solo musician played *Brown Eyed Girl*. The Patrons wore shirts emblazoned with beer logos, most customers were mostly heavy-set, blue-collar men, sitting at the bar reliving past glory and avoiding going home.

The nightly activities of this pathetic crew consisted of talking about the big game + intimidating newcomers.

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Many of them snorted cocaine with the bitchy unionized female servers.

In a nutshell, the Fireside Pub was a disgustingly gross wasteland of marginality.

I wore shirts with collars to work.

"Nice shirt, fag. How's it going tonight, fag? What's it like being a fag, fag?"

These endless nightly taunts grew tiresome.

I worked Thursday-Sunday Nights.

SATURDAY NIGHT (WEEKLY) EQUATION

- Finish Work at Midnight →
- the World + Pop a pill + Pop another pill →
- Sketch Party 7 AM until →
- Leave sketch party 4 PM →
- Arrive at work 5 PM (sleep-deprived)

On this Sunday evening, I was sporting a snarly edge.

Jamie, a bus driver, with a youthful, artery-clogging sheen to his face, because of his two-hundred-sixty pounds, was first up on the taunting me list.

"Where do you live, Lindsay?"

"Vancouver."

"Oh, you live in Gayville."

"You're a bit of a dipshit. And you are right; every one of the million residents of Vancouver is fags. Can I see your Mensa Card?"

"Fag."

"And besides, Jamie, I live in Yaletown; if there were a Gayville, it would be the West End."

"There are too many faggot weirdos in the West End." Jamie continued. "I stay away from them because –"

"Because you are an idiot. Look where we are: this area is rampant with panhandlers and heroin addicts. The West End is clean and liveable. The big difference is Jamie, the people in the West End dress better. Oh yeah, I have never seen gay sex acts breaking out there. When was the last time you saw your dick without a mirror? You stay away from them; that's rich. You do know if one of the 'gays' came up to you and asked you to have sex with them because, of course, the 'gays are attracted to obese middle-aged men, you can always say, NO."

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"You're defending them; you must be one of them."

Another dinosaur, named Ryan, tinkled in, *"I spoke with a Lesbian couple, I asked if they knew their unborn child was going to be retarded, would they about the birth? They said yes. I asked if they knew their child would be gay, their answer was the same. See, Gay, Retard: the same thing."*

Fortunately, murder is legal in New Westminster.

I couldn't take anymore.

"Look around fags. There are ten of you and one toothless woman in here. Collectively, you're pushing the scales at ambulance crashing massive coronary levels. There are stained beer posters on the walls. You've likely not had sex with a sober woman in years."

I began laughing.

"There's velour on the walls. Are we in a Holiday Inn Lounge in the 70s? Let's not forget the musician is playing "Brown Eyed Girl" for the zillionth time. Oh my, look, the toothless lady is leaving just as two fat guys enter, upping the count to twelve. Do you guys get where I'm going? I didn't think so. Anyway, you guys are in a 'GAY' bar right now, just not a good one. Fags."

They never called me fag again.

BOMBSHELLS

1. **24 APRIL 2002** – I sent Trish an e-greeting card, indicating what I wanted to do to her when I got home that night, sexually. A very graphic e-greeting. The e-greetings company fired back the recipient list of my card: Trish + Patrick. Trish had copied my greeting and sent it on to Patrick, changing “tonight” to “next time I see you.”

When Trish came home from work, I told her I was going to hate the conversation we were about to engage in; I asked her, “*What the hell is this? You sent the fucking card to Patrick; why?*”

“Sweetie, don’t be angry; I sent the card to all of my friends.”

I let it slide.

Logic glared in the window, shaking his head.

2. **19 MAY 2002** – Another Sunday = Another Sketch Party @ Trish’s. I retreated to Trish’s computer. An email lay open on the screen. Trish had been exchanging emails with some guy named Rod. Something along the lines of “hot” + “intensity” + “won’t be able to handle” + “it’s too bad your girlfriend and my boyfriend are watching us like hawks.” Rod had returned the email to set up another time.

Fuck off Logic, she said she loved me.

Love joined in, calling Trish a manipulative whore.

I was flying ↑*high*↑. I didn’t enjoy *Logic* and *Love* ganging up on me. I believed they were jealous of what I had, in my deluded state.

SCREW - TWIST - SCREW - TWIST
SCREW - TWIST - SCREW - TWIST

Let me scoop out a little more brain, don’t worry, we’ll keep it in a safe place.

Effortlessly, Trish denied the emails. She claimed somebody was trying to screw us up. Trish believed her performance. She was —

Her friends bought her performance as well; they too went searching for the real —

She cheated, hurting me; I let it go; I’m just as bad as her. Please don’t try to convince me —

I met Rod at the club one week later; I asked him if it was true?

He ran.

Paranoia entered the fray.

Pop a pill for a blast of elation, just teasing. I'll rip the moment from your mind. Everyone in the club will be after Trish. Feeling crazy yet? You'll have visual and auditory hallucinations. Elaborate hand signals will be exchanged between everyone and Trish all night long. The beauty: you'll think what's happening is real. You won't be able to escape. She cheated, but you'll become the villain quickly, fun, hey? She cheats. You pay and pay and pay. Keep thinking she loves you, sucker.

I never embraced *Paranoia*. It swallowed me.

A handsome guy across the room touches his cap, pats his chest twice, winks, looks upward, touches his inner thigh, winks again, and double claps.

I stole home.

I think he was telling Trish his work schedule.

Another pill would surely fix things.

THE OLD TERMINAL PUB

NEW WESTMINSTER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

14 JUNE 2002

I was recruited by the owner of the Old Terminal Pub after he witnessed my performance on Sunday evening at the Fireside.

New pub, same shoddy treatment.

When I opened the pub's doors for the morning, two humongous ironworkers stumbled in. I was alone until a sprinkling of functioning alcoholic regulars arrived.

Reg, one of the idiot regulars, piped in, "*Hey fag, it's time to cut off those buffoons.*"

"Reg, I have got things under control, and I will handle them."

The ironworkers approached the bar asking for beers + shots.

"Hey guys, I think you might have had enough for today. How about I pour you a couple of shots, you can finish your beers, and you guys can head out for your day?"

They agreed and went back to their seats.

Reg noticed the shooters and barked at me, "*Kick the clowns out, now.*"

He may as well have been calling them Ace.

"Who are you calling a clown? Wasn't that your whore wife I saw down on the corner on twelfth?"

Reg flashed the Ironworkers a single digit.

Let's get ready to –

I intervened, addressing the whole bar, "**SHUT THE FUCK UP.**" I lowered my voice. *"Those two will drink their shooters and then leave. If this escalates, there will be losers here today; I will not be one of them."* (36)

THE PUB CALMED UNTIL

Reg flashed his digit again.

One of the ironworkers, a man twice my size, rushed toward Reg. I jumped in the middle of them. I blocked the ironworker. He spun, placing his arm on the edge of the pool table. I forcefully pushed my right hand down on his arm. His arm snapped, an ambulance came, the ironworkers left.

Reg walked up to me and said, *"You're not a fag after all."*

I hated working in the backwards community of New Westminster.

I couldn't wait to get home to Trish.

PICNIC IN THE PARK

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VANCOUVER

JULY 13, 2002

Have I gone mad?

Bedlam was about to ensue.

I'll eagerly await your diagnosis as the pages keep turning.

My birthday was in three days, Trish planned a picnic in the park with friends, mostly hers.

She gave me a card filled with love and affection. When I read it, I became weak, believing every word.

Hello again, do you mind if I take another scoop?

SKETCH PARTY

VANCOUVER

Knock, Knock.

Oh fuck, Trish's Grandpa was at the door.

Out of the seven people there, not even one could speak in an understandable dialect,

including me.

I sat at the computer.

Grandpa asked Trish, "*Are you okay?*"

Trish responded, saying, "*Galywilbeens.*"

Michael (more on him later, ↑high↑ on a mixed bowl of drugs, solidified with pot, had been laughing hysterically for the last five hours.

Later, Michael #2 (more on him later), ↑high↑ on a combination of drugs, solidified with pot, couldn't stop laughing hysterically. Instead, he'd been laughing uncontrollably for five hours.

Spineless Dr. Kenny attempted to help by saying, "*Parang thig eryed si ko l'il teg Tris ot.*"

I was positive *that Parang thig eryed si ko l'il teg Tris* was meaningless. I also thought maybe Grandpa would like to pop a pill.

Grandpa shook his head and then said in broken English to Trish, "*Stay in school. Make sure you rotate your tires,*" and then sauntered away.

INTERVENTION INTERVENTION

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VANCOUVER

17 JULY 2002

Jeremy, a regular party acquaintance, called me.

"Hey, Linds, can you give me a ride to pick up furniture."

I reluctantly agreed, leaving Trish home alone.

I returned two hours later to find a note on the door.

I'm with Grandpa, and I will be back
shortly.

Love Trish

I had left my key behind and waited nervously for Trish to return. 10, 11, 12, 1, 2, 3, 4 AM, Trish finally came home.

"Sweetie, they figured things out. They were doing an intervention."

I hugged her and drifted off to sleep, thinking the club days were finally ending.

I would no longer have to save Trish from collapsing face-first toward the floor in the Red Room. Trish tweaking was to be a thing of the past.

A PHONE CALL

A PHONE CALL

VANCOUVER

19 JULY 2002

Her cousin called while Trish and I were out for dinner; her cousin lives with Grandpa.

"Yeah, Cous, it was bad timing. Grandpa must think I'm fucked-up. No, no, I haven't spoken to him since Sunday."

HARISH

NOVEMBER 2002

The club wasn't a thing of the past unless the past is in the future. Our lives were becoming filled with a new posse of sketched-out antagonists to replace those that had crashed.

Enter Harish. Trish's sixth new best friend of the year. Harish enjoyed being single. Harish loved prowling for sex.

Late in the month, Trish flew to Miami for work. The flight typically takes nine hours; I dropped by her place at 9AM; Trish was already home this Sunday Morning. This struck me as odd.

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BOMBSHELL

3. **30 NOVEMBER 2002** - I stopped by Trish's between bar gigs; Trish was out with Harish. I had taken a second job at Pat's Pub. The computer was resting on Trish's inbox; I opened it; There was an email from Patrick. Trish hadn't been in Miami; she'd been in San Francisco. Before I left for work, Trish and Harish returned. Tears were pouring down my face.

"Sweetie, it's not what you think. Someone is trying to fuck us up." Trish pleaded.

I questioned my sanity. *May I take another scoop? Thank you.*

Guilt, Logic and Self Love told me to take care of myself. I left for work. I was still crying.

I must leave.

I sent an email to Patrick, asking him WTF?

He pleaded innocence.

I told him to fuck off.

He said he'd step away. He said he wanted us to work things out.

I bought his bullshit.

I was becoming borderline certifiable by wanting to work things out; Trish did as well. For Trish, it was easy, just lie.

COHABITATE

VANCOUVER

1 DECEMBER 2002

If you happen to be wondering what's wrong with me?

The answer: A LOT.

If you're wondering what's wrong with Trish, thank you.

We moved in together.

What I've shared has damaged me. Trish became my drug.

I needed to let her go, to crash. I didn't. Instead, I convinced myself if I didn't love her know all she'd ever be is a liar and a cheat. ⁽⁴⁵⁾

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TRUE LOVE

VANCOUVER

15 FEBRUARY 2003

Against all the odds, we made it.

Trish was off to Montreal for work.

She phoned on this chilly Saturday night to say, *"I love you. Thank you for not leaving. I can't wait to get home."*

Twelve days after Trish and I beat all odds, life was spiralling upward. I was out with my good friend David. David was privy to some of Trish and my relationship histrionics. But, despite our flaws, he was cheering for us.

At night's end, I felt an urge to share my feelings. I looked over at David and casually stated, *"David, life is great. We made it past our problems. I forgave her. I'm the happiest I've ever been!"*

34. I'm sorry.
35. I'm sorry.
36. I'm sorry.
37. I'm sorry.
38. Implode?
39. I'm sorry.
40. Masturbating. (41) Ewe, gross.
41. Masturbation is good for prostate health.
42. The main goal of any relationship should be survival. Nothing more.
43. New Westminster is not really a backwards community.
44. I don't know what I meant.
45. Clap. Clap. Clap.

AND
AND

BOOM
BOOM

GOES THE DYNAMITE
GOES THE DYNAMITE

PEOPLE MATTER

VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

28 FEBRUARY-7 APRIL 2003

PEOPLE MATTER

VANCOUVER

28 FEBRUARY 2003

Douglas was homeless.

I am not.

Douglas sat on a bus bench.

I plonked myself beside him.

Douglas was sober.

Me, not so much; I had just finished my last pint at my favourite watering hole and needed a breather before stumbling the rest of the way home.

"Hello, can you buy me a coffee? He asked.

I handed him \$2. And then, like an asshole would say, *"Don't spend it on drugs."*

Together, we watched the world pass by.

"You know, I'm not homeless. If that's what you are thinking? I'm seventy-five, and my pension leaves me scrambling for survival. And besides, drugs wouldn't have allowed me to play to my age."

"Okay, I understand. May I ask you a question? Great. What do you think matters most in life?"

"That's an easy answer. People. People matter. Sadly, I believe most of us have lost sight of that."

Douglas reached for my hand, shook it, and then said, *"Thank you."*

I got up, nodded my head, and began stumbling the rest of the way home.

Little did I know, if I knew the traumas hovering on this story's horizon, I may have remained glued to the bench with Douglas, watching the world pass by.

I must turn the page.

I'm glad you are with me. Life's amperage is about to be cranked to eleven.

Promise you'll stay?

I may need a hug at the end.

DUMPED

VANCOUVER

3 MARCH 2003

8:30 AM, the alarm began blaring, waking us. We were still coming down from the weekend's debauchery.

What's the saying: If it's too good to be true —

My eyes peeped over, I turned onto my side and looked lovingly at Trish, *"Good morning, Sweetie."*

"I'm dumping you," was her reply.

"What?"

I pried her for clarification.

"We're done." She got dressed and slammed the door shut on her way to work. When she returned four hours later, she continued. *"I'm not as happy as I could be. We are not a couple anymore."*

Fucking drugs.

"You just moved in. What about our living arrangement?" I asked.

"You're an amazing man, I want to keep living with you."

Logic emphatically pressed me to *throw her out; you must end this bullshit.*

This will pass; she said she loved me yesterday.

"Harish says you are not thirty. That I deserve more. You are not as successful as you should be by now."

This will pass.

HOW TO WIN LOVE BACK: BINGO

At work that night, the bar was robbed.

A far past-shady character walked in and calmly announced he was a robber.

In a deadpan fashion, I replied, *"You're a robber? What is it you want? Is it the cash drawer? I have an idea: how about you sit back and relax while I make you a drink. But, of course, since you are robbing the joint, you will not have to pay, nor will I phone the police. So, when you finish your drink, I'll hand over the cash, sending you on your merry way. How does that sound?"*

He looked at me in a baffled manner and said, *"My name is Robert. There is a meal set aside for me."*

BRANDON

VANCOUVER

7 MARCH 2003

On this postcard-perfect Friday spring day in Choices Market, one block from my house, we bumped into each other.

"Hey Brandon, how are you doing?"

His eyes looked pained.

"Not so good."

He was trembling.

I hugged him.

Brandon backstepped two times, looked directly into my eyes, and said, *"Life sucks. I've got to go."*

He then walked home on this perfect day and hung himself.

Brandon was eighteen. He was artistically gifted. I met him when he was sixteen in the club.

We adults had no reason to hang out with him. But, since the club doesn't serve alcohol and drugs don't require ID, age became shamefully irrelevant.

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I cry as I write this.

Brandon was gay, trying to fit in a while being isolated from his family; everything was urgent.

Brandon adored Trish. Later that day, when I told Trish the news, she didn't care.

I hated that week.

Logic and Love chimed in, telling me to stop the self-torment and throw Trish out?

WHO'S MATTHEW?

Trish met Matthew on her last night in Montreal; moments after, she called to say *I love you*.

She was attempting a long-distance relationship with him; Matthew's a lawyer; I'm not. Trish pointed that fact out to me.

Hey, this time, do you mind if we remove your spine? Of course, you don't.

I called Matthew and introduced myself as Trish's boyfriend. He said he'd cut off all contact with her.

He lied.

Living together was going to be heavenly.

SKETCH PARTY MICHAEL (#2)

VANCOUVER

15 MARCH 2003

Mike made it clear his one desire was to get into Trish's pants. I hated him. Trish discounted my interpretations of his intentions. Until they went for coffee together and he painted the picture for her. Trish declined his advances.

Somehow, Michael and I defied the odds and became friends.

I fucking hated home. Home felt like a prison. On my way home from the Old Terminal, I would go for drinks to prolong my inevitable need to go home.

This night, I ran into Michael at the Odyssey, motioning me to join him in a quiet spot.

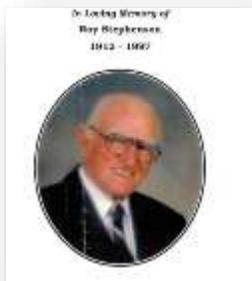
"Lindsay, Trish doesn't deserve you. You are a good man. I consider you a good friend," he paused to gain his composure. "Remember how I always said I would never make it to thirty? Well, I have cancer; I'm dying?"

Is that you, Spike?

AUNT PRISCILLA

VANCOUVER

MARCH 29, 2003



Occasionally, Priscilla would phone me from Edmonton to say, "I love you," nothing more.

Today's call was more sombre.

"Your sisters, your evil sisters, disrespected me. They showed zero gratitude for all the things I've done for them. I'm cutting them out of my Will."

"Priscilla, why are you telling me this?"

"Because I love you, you've always been my favourite. Ever since your mother and father died, you've been on your own. We all need a family. I'm yours. Sweetie, I'm going to my doctor in a few minutes. He's going to tell me I'm dying; I'm going to be with my true love, Roy."

I responded by saying, "I love you," and then I collapsed to the floor and cried uncontrollably.

My brother Jim called me a few days later, "Lindsay, you need to drop everything and come to Edmonton; Priscilla doesn't have much time left."

"Jim, my life is in shambles. I cry daily. I don't have the strength. We have said our goodbyes. I don't need another reason to be able to cry on queue."

PRINCE
LINDSAY

VANCOUVER

7 APRIL 2003

Trish wanted to bring a dog into our broken home. I said okay. I'm ~~am~~ was an idiot.

If you want to win her back, you know Lindsay, allowing her to get a dog is a good starting point.

Who's the idiot now?

Trish selected a Border-Collie from an animal rescue. When Trish brought the dog home, Fuzzy instantly gave up one of her nine lives.

When Trish left for work, the dog went nuts; it barked uncontrollably and began thrusting itself against the sliding glass doors of our sunroom.

When I told Trish the dog had to go, she immediately dubbed me, bad guy.

Trish left for work and the Border-Collie began to bark uncontrollably while repeatedly throwing itself against the sliding glass door of the sunroom.

Self-destruction had become part of my pain menu.

I never missed a shift at Pat's Pub (New Job) or the Old Terminal. More destructively, I never missed a shift at the club. After Michael told me of his illness, I checked in weekly. We ran into each other again at the Odyssey.

"Lindsay, you need to kick her out; I hate telling you this; we fucked."

How do you remain compassionate to a dying man when he just told you he'd fucked your girlfriend?

"I'm sorry I told you. I should've remained silent."

Yes, you should of, you guilt dumping asshole, I hate you.

When I arrived home, I confronted Trish. "Trish, Michael told me. You fucking cheated on me. Did you ever love me?"

She barely looked up from the computer when she said, "I was trying to get you a job. I thought Michael would hire you."

I grabbed the scruff of her neck and threw her into the hallway slamming the door in her

face, never allowing her back into my life ever again.

Unfortunately, I was spineless.

Logic & Love gave up on me.

It was time to manipulate with kindness. A lady at the *Terminal Pub* was forced to give her dog away. I phoned Trish with the news.

"Sweetie, would you still like a dog?"

She declined my offer.

When I arrived home from work, I had to use the bathroom; when I opened the door, a baby Jack Russell Terrier greeted me.

Prince stopped at my feet, looked up, and went, ~~meow~~, *ruff*.

The dog experiment continued –

And I continued drifting out to sea, with a dark melody playing on a continuous loop in the background, tormenting me, reminding me constantly of the ass I was willfully becoming.

When I hit eject, the volume increased instead of stopping the pain, drowning me in my own misery fuelled in denial.

TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL

VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

28 FEBRUARY-7 APRIL 2003

The Old Terminal Pub sits in an isolated parking lot in a bad part of New Westminister. Sharing the parking lot is an adult video store. One week before this night, thugs beat a store clerk to within an inch of his life. It was a random act.

The pub patrons consist of longshoremen and construction workers, most lacking refinement. As mentioned before, since I was the lone male employee – until the arm snap – *FAG*, was my, pet name.

Most nights, the regulars would be liquored by 7 and then on their way home to their wives and kids.

On most nights, when the last Neanderthal slithered out, I'd be left alone.

The Terminal is in the middle of a large empty parking lot, far from civilization, with two entrances, and just me inside.

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I'd often lock the doors, allowing the odd late comer in, only if I knew them.

The fog was dense on this night. Fifteen minutes shy of closing, I heard a knock at the door.

The knocking began cascading like the rain beating down outside.

Standing at the door was a large man, well over six feet tall, many pounds over two hundred. He was dishevelled, rougher than the regulars; I had never seen him before.

I let him in.

His cadence was a low, broken baritone.

"I've driven past the pub on several occasions. So, I decided to stop tonight to case out the joint. Do you want to play stick?"

We grabbed our cues as we ambled to the pool table. Our arms brushed. I shuddered.

He looked heavenward, paused and in the darkest of timbers with his voice trashed from years of alcohol, tobacco, and substance abuse, he began a deliberate sermon.

"I rarely drink now. What time do you close? Are you often left alone? That's scary; the world can be evil. I'm an ex-con. I developed a significant taste for heroin and crack; I've done terrible things. I've hurt people.

I remained silent. Strangely, his words were comforting.

“My wife is gone. She’s too far gone. Demons have taken her away. My wife and I royally fucked up: we lost our children to dope. My wife lost her mind. She crashed. She burned.”

“My kids have become my life. My wife is too far into the world of ‘hype’ that normalcy is not an option anymore.”

His voice cracked.

“She’s the love of my life. I introduced her to the destruction; I’m paying a self-inflicted heavy price. She can’t come back. I’m responsible for her flaws. That’s my ticket to misery.”

I racked the balls.

He asked me to break.

I gently pulled back the cue, thrusting it into the cue ball, sending it fiercely into the tightly racked balls. The balls scattered. The 8-ball shot into the corner pocket. Instant victory. A rarity.

Regardless of my new friend’s outward appearance – he’d fallen far, but his resolve was still present, still beating strongly.



“I’ve come to an understanding: I’ve had to let my love go. She can’t come back. My children, their futures, that’s all that matters now; my life is belongs to them. May I tell you what I see?”

I nodded, looking directly into his bloodshot eyes.

“You’re broken and confused. You’re struggling to find meaning. People are dying; some are leaving you. You want to hold on; you’ve lost love. I see the pain in your eyes. My friend, all I can offer is, it’s not your fault. You must believe that. People lie, sabotaging the good in life; that’s just the way it is. You’re part of what’s right in this world. It’s going to get worse for you, for a while at least.”

I listened, speechless.

“Your lover made a mistake. She’s not coming back. Sorry. You’ll survive. You’re a great man. I can see that in your eyes. Cry. Cry every day. One day the crying will end, and you’ll wake up a better person. Don’t let life destroy you. You won’t. I’ve come here tonight to tell you this. That is my mission.”

He walked to the door. He asked if I'd ever seen him before. I shook my head.

"My friend, you will survive and come back stronger. That is your mission. Believe it."

I gazed out the window cut in the middle of the pub's entrance as this man I'd never seen before vanished into a dense fog.

That night, when I drove home, the fog intensified. My heart was pounding. My chest felt like it was about to burst. My legs were shaking so violently it was hard to control the gas pedal and brakes on my drive home. My mind was fixated on his words. *My mission* kept coming to the forefront.

I skipped going to the *Odyssey* that night, choosing to go directly home instead. Then, when I arrived, I went straight to my bedroom, undressed, slipped under the covers, and continued to tremble.

My mind tumbled in the words of a stranger. His comments marked an instant when my realities ceased to exist, and another world started rushing to life. I felt myself spring back to alive. A stranger's words had begun to crack something vital for my survival open within the confines of my soul. I gasped for air as I drifted off to sleep.

FAREWELL + EVIL + CRACK WHORE

EDMONTON - CALGARY - VANCOUVER

28 MAY-23 JUNE 2003

GOODBYE PRISCILLA

24 MAY 2003 - EDMONTON, ALBERTA

EVIL SISTERS

CALGARY ALBERTA

4 JUNE 2003

Uncle James was my last living uncle.

180 Merely three days passed after Priscilla's funeral when my sister Bernice phoned. It was our first conversation in years. I thought she discovered the *Will* and was about to layer guilt on me.

"Uncle James died last night, I thought you should know."

My pig-headedness to continue my trips to the club was counterproductive to my recovery. Both Trish and ↑*high*↑ need to be expelled.

I'd see Trish hanging out at the club with *The Big C*, laughing.

I needed a hug instead; Trish started parading my potential replacements in front of me. *Paranoia* paid me regular visits. I was tripping in a vicious weekly cycle.

TRAUMA

FOLLOWED BY PAIN

CHASED WITH DRUGS

ENHANCED WITH *PARANOIA* AND ISOLATION

MAN'S BEST FRIEND

VANCOUVER

JUNE 2003

I took Prince on long daily walks.

Usually, two blocks in, he'd sit down and refuse to move. So, I took Prince on long daily carries.

I'd stop for lunch, and I'd ask Prince for answers. ⁽⁴⁶⁾

"Prince, what's life all about?"

He'd tilt his head to the right, his ears flopped inside out, and then he'd look up at me and say in the only way a dog could say, "Ruff!"

After one of our substantial carries, I laid down, + I drifted off to sleep with Prince by my side on the lawn at English Bay; I had my knees bent at a sixty-degree angle. I woke to discover Prince laying on my stomach, fast asleep. A stranger ~~stalker~~ snapped photos of us. He offered to email them to me.



A few minutes later, an RCMP Officer (Duane), who happened to be a friend of both me and Pat (RCMP, PAT), approached. He asked how I was doing?

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"Thanks for asking, Duane. I'm a bit of a mess. My life has been turned upside down, you know, relationships, illnesses, deaths... I'm sorry."

"Linds, your boss from the Sandpiper, Dale, I hate to tell you this, his sister, Andrea, was found dead in her apartment last night."

After Duane left, Prince crawled down off my stomach, with his tail wagging feverishly; I looked in his eyes and said, "Mommy + Daddy love you. One day things will return to normal. I promise."

Prince tilted his head to the right and —

CRACK WHORE JESSICA

VANCOUVER

23 JUNE 2003

Jessica is a gifted artist, but unfortunately, a lousy human being. I don't apologize for giving Jessica a pet name | Crack Whore |. Jessica was a mean, aggressive bitch, to me.

While ↑high↑ at the club this night, she swept Trish and a mutual friend Neil off their feet. *"You two are so cute. I'd love to use you as models for my art!"*

Vanity led her to favourite.

Neil was a mutual friend of both Trish and mine.

We drifted apart because misery doesn't like company. Especially when the party was in full gear. The party continued around me. Jessica's insertion turned them into *Mean Girls*. *Jessica was a gin-loving party girl who loved dabbling in the more illicit.*

My party was crashing. They didn't care.

They knew what was unfolding in my life, see the sentences above.

Crack whore was aware of Trish and my living arrangements. It didn't matter to her. She bombarded email after email to Trish, showering her with new candidates to replace me with.

Throw her out. Hell, we give up; you're on your own. Love and Logic sauntered away.

Jessica's *mark* was derived because she has two children; her ex had custody; periodically, they stayed with her. Occasionally, Jessica, *Crack Whore*, would break outlines of Crystal Meth on my *fucking* kitchen counter. That's why I gave her the name.

"What the fuck are you guys doing? Trish, you told me you'd never do this shit. You said you have limits. So why are you bringing this garbage into our home? Jessica, what if your kids need you?" I wailed!

"Don't judge me. You don't know what's best for my children."

"I'm certain it's not a cracked-out mother."

I offered to give them a ride wherever they were going.

"NO," was screeched in unison.

FLASH FORWARD TWO MONTHS

Jessica almost died from an overdose.

I continued to make monumental mistakes. I continued to cry every day. I punished myself by going to the club. Afterwards, I'd end up in dangerous, soul-sapping encounters.

I disgusted myself.

Often, we'd go to the club as a group of "pretend" friends. Once inside, I'd be cast aside, ostracised for the night. At closing time, Trish would host *Sketch Parties* at our place.

Despair shuffled *Guilt* aside.

He said he'd take care of me for a while.

I longed to hear Priscilla's "I love you."

46. Are you certifiable? ⁽⁴⁷⁾

47. Yes, probably.

PASSPORT

VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

19 JULY 2003

TIME OUT

On March 3, 2003, it started with Trish dumping me, and it was now two weeks into July and four fucking months; only four fucking months had passed.

- Breakup
- Suicide
- Cancer
- Alienation
- Infidelity
- Cancer
- Death
- Death
- AND fucking Death

Had entered my life.

I wanted to die. The medicine I was ingesting at the club was to provide the solution. The problem, the prescriptions were never potent enough. So, I continued spinning on the hamster wheel, mind deluded, demons nearing my core.

I was continuing to fall down this dark, lonely tunnel. The tunnel was narrow, but strangely, had no sides. The pace quickened. I passed *level after level* reaching out frantically, grabbing for relief, something to hold onto; I only grasped air. I flew by *Guilt, Logic, and Love*. They were reaching for me—an invisible force was keeping them at bay. The velocity reached a lightning pace. I wanted this to end. I imagined my body slamming into the ground with such force that it would explode, leaving nothing more than an unidentifiable stain on the cold asphalt, only to be washed away by the next rain. Everything changed overnight. I was optimistic I had reached the precipice, and falling down the tunnel and dying, was next.

FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

VANCOUVER

19 JUNE 2003

It was time to fight for survival.

I decided to implement a **2 Step Plan**

STEP 1: Leave my environment.

Europe popped into my mind.

STEP 2: Escape the Club.

I failed miserably with Step 2.

SHOWER — RINSE — REPEAT

I kept imbibing in illicit.

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My friend Dave had worked with me at the *Sandpiper*. He decided to come with me on my adventure to Europe. He quit the pub, eagerly anticipating our journey. The only thing slowing our departure was renewing my passport.

"*Sir, we can't issue you a new passport. Oh my, you have a tear on your birth certificate. You'll need to get a new one,*" a civil servant at the passport office said to me.

She continued.

"*If you'd like, you can expedite the process. It will take only two days. All you need to do is contact Vital Statistics in Edmonton and provide them with both of your parents' names.*"

I made the call.

TWO WEEKS PASS

"*Linds, any news on your passport? I want to hit the friendly skies,*" David anxiously queried.

I phoned Vital Stats to inquire about the delay.

In a drab manner, a female civil servant said, "*Sir, we can't issue you a new birth certificate. The information you provided doesn't match your birth records.*"

I confusingly responded with, "*What do you need from me?*"

Then in the same drab, emotionless manner as before, she asked me, "*Could you phone your parents and ask them who your real parents are?*"

I stepped off the edge of a cliff, + my freefall continued.

I'm forty-three-fucking-years-old. I watched my parents die. WTF. Tears rolled over my cheeks.

I gasped and asked the civil servant, "*Could you phone your parents and ask them?*"

"*What do you mean? What does this mean?*" I asked. An eternity passed – in real-time, two seconds. "*I watched them both die; take their last breaths. Up until seconds ago, they were my real parents.*"

Growing up in my family had been incredibly hard. Something was always amiss. Constantly hearing the chants, "*Lindsay, you are not one of us,*" or having my sister telling me, "*You will never be as good as your older brothers,*" slammed into me like a freight train. I didn't know any better. How could I? Every taunt. Every hate-filled word certainly must have been limiting my future? I was different than other kids. I felt isolated. I needed to scream out, **I'm HERE, I BELONG, I'M ONE OF YOU.** But now, the words of someone who I don't know. Nor does she care about me in any way; rocked my world to the core.

The civil servant continued in her empathy, lacking fashion, "*Could you phone one of your older brothers or sisters and ask them?*"

All I could find the strength to muster was, "*I guess they wouldn't actually be brothers or sisters, would they? Could you make that call?*"

"No," was her answer. It was also the only sign of understanding and compassion she showed.

I wiped away my tears and asked to speak to a supervisor.

The supervisor came on the line, seeming to care as she fired a plethora of questions my way.

- *What are the names of your siblings? What schools have you attended?*
- *What sports have you played?*
- *When did you masturbate for the first time?*
- *How many times have you masturbated?*
- *When did you get your driver's license?*
- *Who's Mark?*
- *How many rolls of toilet paper have you used?*

At least she could understand calling my older siblings would be heart-wrenching, if not impossible.

At least she seemed to understand how difficult it would be to call my older brothers.

Hey Jim, while I was renewing my passport, I found out; anyway, who's my fucking father; and who the hell are you?

The supervisor said to me, "Lindsay, once I can confirm your identity, I will need you to take the following steps:

- 1) *Once you receive your birth certificate, send me a copy.*
- 2) *Once I receive it, I will send you your official birth records listing who your real parents are?*

FLASH FORWARD TWO MONTHS

I'M FORTY-THREE-YEARS OLD.

THIS IS MY LIFE.

I FEEL BETRAYED.

LIED TOO.

CHEATED.

I'M FORTY-THREE-YEARS OLD.

AND I DON'T KNOW WHO I AM?

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I called Wayne for support.

"My god, Lindsay, this is the second time in the last couple of weeks you have shocked me.

Next up, I called Dave to update him on our trips delay.

Dave took the news in stride.

"I love you, man; your life is so not boring!"

Hello, Lindsay, I see your support network has vacated. You seem to be in some disrepair. So, my friend, I'm going to do the driving for a while, if that's okay with you?

I'm not going to give you a choice. I'm going to fuck things up, causing immense emotional damage, you will become lonely. When I'm all done, you'll have only one way to go. Without most of your brain and your other allies, not present, you're going to have to trust me.

Hey, if you're here to help, why did you hit the down button?

And besides, who the hell are you?

WHO IS LINDSAY WINCHERAUK?

Lindsay Wincherauk is a fearless writer. He has published two books and has had more than eighteen OPEDs appear in major commuter newspapers. Lindsay wasn't born with a silver spoon in his mouth. His father (who wasn't his father) worked as a mechanic. His mother (who wasn't his mother) worked as an excellent chef in a diner. In fact, his birth was in a secret place where | society deemed | unfit mothers were sent to give birth in isolation – shading families from shame. If the babies survived being born, usually, they were sold to wealthy Americans or adopted out to farm families.

Lindsay's life began with a lie.

Despite Lindsay's perilous beginnings, starting with deception, Lindsay knew no better and went through life excelling at things, usually in two-year stints. Be that athletics (hall of fame, record holding, one-eyed quarterback), scholastically, career-wise (generating more than \$70 million in revenue for one company), socially, + without question: creatively!

Lindsay's challenging beginning instilled in Lindsay heaping doses of compassion and empathy. Lindsay's life starting out as a lie gave him a keen sense to spot BS from miles away. It also provided him with a dry sense of humour and an understanding those born with silver spoons in their mouths will never be self-aware enough to understand (or admit) their good fortune.

During Lindsay's work career, he was well-liked by all coworkers. Lindsay was also well respected by his diverse collection of clients, developing several fantastic friendships, primarily because Lindsay is known for his unflinching integrity and ability to hold conversations on most topics.

Lindsay's life mantra is:

The most valuable part of life is the fabulous people we meet during our journeys. If you treat people with respect (leaving judgment at the door), and more importantly, by opening doors for those less fortunate or who can't speak up for themselves, you are living a good, compassionate life. Making money at all costs is not the only thing mattering. Life can be difficult + devastatingly unfair.

Lindsay believes sharing vulnerability is what makes us human. Lindsay will never shy away from being honest about his pain.

Lindsay also believes we must stand up for ourselves, + more importantly, for those who are too burdened by the injustices of life, they can't find the strength to stand up for themselves.

Some things Lindsay is most proud of are when:

- A sixty-year-old employee of his, who had entered a point of life where life had become more struggle than joy (it happens to all of us as we age), said to Lindsay, *"I must thank you. I've listened to how you treat people, + by listening, I've learned so much about compassion and patience. Thank you. I consider you a great friend."*
- Another employee who was struggling with addiction thanked Lindsay for his kindness, presenting Lindsay with a Christmas card from him and his girlfriend. Tucked inside the card: lottery tickets.

LINDSAY WINCHERAUK, compassionate, empathetic, well-read, kind, blessed with unflinching integrity, humour in balance, loved by coworkers + friends alike.

Lindsay will always stick up for the underdog. Lindsay understands there are countless older people suffering job loss because COVID gave some companies an opportunity to – Lindsay thinks it is essential to draw attention to this life-threatening issue by being the voice for those too broken to speak up for themselves.

Lindsay is currently pitching four manuscripts to publishers and literary agencies. One of the manuscripts (he can't talk about) will blow the roof off the predatory practices of – Lindsay is writing relentlessly and is also pitching OPEDs and short stories, fiction, + non to literary magazines around the globe.

Lindsay has appeared on Breakfast Television, radio programs in Montreal, + several others in the Vancouver area. Lindsay has also been a featured guest on CKNW + CBC, both on several occasions. And Lindsay was a vital witness of a Hate Crime. This led to the first Hate Crime conviction in Canadian legal history, resulting in him being a speaker at an Enough is Enough Rally (anti-violence rally) with dignitaries, politicians, law enforcement, and community leaders in front of a crowd of approximately five thousand.

Lindsay was the **#1 MIXED-TAPE DJ** at the **UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN** for most of the nineteen-eighties, a fact bringing him joy.

Lindsay resides in Vancouver.
